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Godwin - "Claudien" - 1883.

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THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
CLASS OF 1882
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“CLAUDIAN.”

A FEW NOTES ON THE ARCHITECTURE
AND COSTUME.

A LETTER TO WILSON BARRETT, ESQ.,

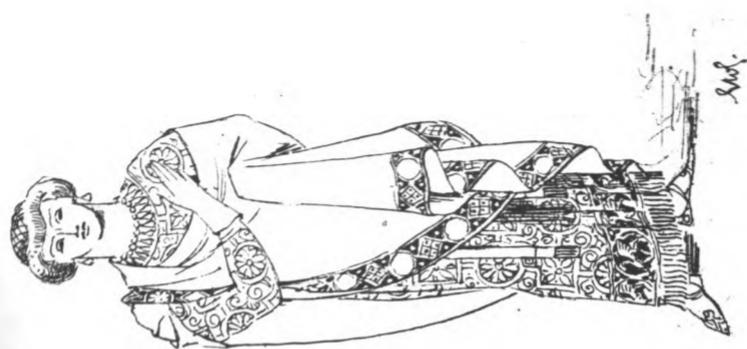
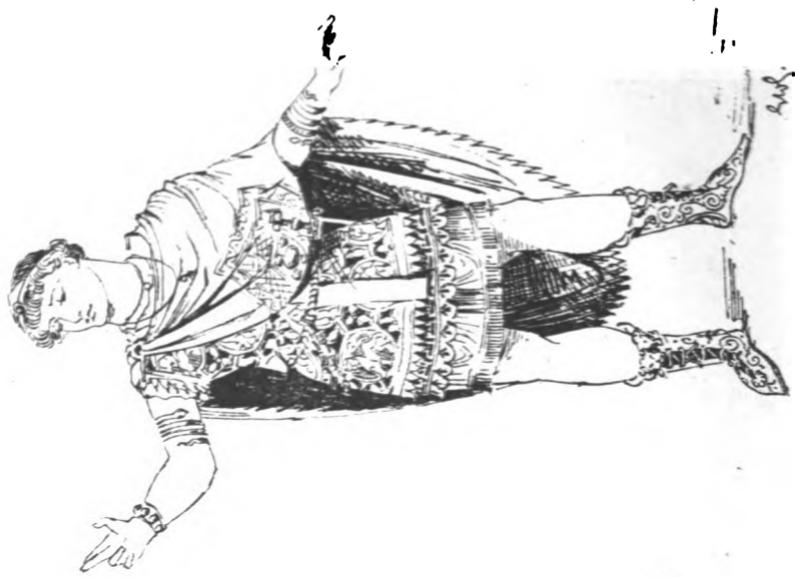
BY

E. W. GODWIN, F.S.A.

Nov., 1883.

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FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1818



A FEW NOTES ON THE ARCHITECTURE AND COSTUME OF THE PERIOD OF THE PLAY OF "CLAUDIAN." A.D. 360—460.

MY DEAR BARRETT,—

The extremely interesting period (A.D. 360—460) of the play you are about to produce is almost a blank in the modern history of art.

The architecture, costume, and "properties" of the Greeks and Romans in what are called "heathen times," are published in numerous works, and our museums are tolerably well stocked with examples thereof.

So, also, of the matured Byzantine style, which dates from the reign of Justinian, Time has spared a valuable series of specimens. But, at the period of your play, Classic art was *in extremis*, and Byzantine art had scarcely come to the birth. It is not unlikely, therefore, that you, the authors, and those interested in the early ages of Christianity may be curious to know where I have looked for evidence, in producing the sketches furnished by me to your scenic artists, Mr. Walter Hann and Mr. Stafford Hall; to your costumiers, Madame Auguste, Mr. Barthe, and Miss Smelt; and to the makers of the "properties."

The period with which we are dealing may, perhaps, be best described as the first Romanesque, or Christianised Roman; for it was during the fourth and fifth centuries that the Roman Empire gradually became Christian. A very brief chronological statement may help us to remember a few dates useful to us in looking at the play.

- A.D. 330. The Greek city, Byzantium, in great part rebuilt by Constantine. He doubled it in size, made it the capital of the empire, called it after his own name (Constantinople), and solemnly dedicated it this year to the Virgin Mary.
- A.D. 361—363. The reign of Julian, called the Apostate.
- A.D. 378—395. The reign of Theodosius I., called the Great, the last Roman Emperor who governed the whole empire.
- A.D. 395—408. The reign of Arcadius (eldest son of Theodosius I.), Emperor of the East.
- A.D. 408—450. The reign of Theodosius II. (son of Arcadius), Emperor of the East, who ascended the throne at the age of seven, under the guardianship of his sister Pulcheria, then fifteen years old. She was declared Empress, had the virtual government in her hands, and, on his death, succeeded to the Eastern Empire.

A.D. 450—457. Marcian, who married Pulcheria, and reigned as Emperor of the East.

A.D. 457—474. Leo I., called the Great. In 456, he was only a military tribune, but, fortunately, was also steward to Aspar, a patrician and commander of the guards. Aspar might himself have been emperor, had he not been guilty of the Arian heresy. He, however, recommended his servant Leo to the soldiers, who proclaimed him Emperor. He was solemnly crowned by Anatolius, the Patriarch of Constantinople; probably the first instance of such an ecclesiastical ceremony.

The City of Constantinople, at the time of the opening of the play, would have presented three distinct phases of art.

1. The Greek, of which there was very little left after A.D. 196, when Severus overthrew Byzantium, and demolished the city even to its walls.

2. The Roman work of Severus, A.D. 196, who rebuilt a great part of the city, the baths and the porticoes (or colonnade of the hippodrome), and the Roman work of Claudius II., 268—270.

3. The Romanesque, or Christianised Roman of Constantine, A.D. 328—330, which was of such wide extent that it practically amounted to a new city.

Art in the time of Constantine was at a very low ebb: the good things, in the shape of sculpture and mosaic, which enriched the new buildings, were almost invariably old work used up again, or copies.

The commemorative columns set up were, in general design, weak replicas of those in Rome. Nature in Art had passed its limits, and as a consequence they drifted asunder, and the old connection ceased; henceforth art was to be built up by ruler and compass—geometrically. Squares, circles, and triangles were to replace that freedom of line no instrument can command; the capital was no longer carved by the sculptor, but cut with hard precision by the mason, and a new style was evoked that was destined to become the mother of mediæval art.

If you compare the capitals and cornice enrichments on the Arch of Titus with those in the Arch of Constantine, then with those in the Church of St. John at Constantinople,* erected A.D. 463, and with the work of 461—467 in St. John Lateran,† and these again with the capitals in S. Sophia (sixth century), you will see at once what I mean.

Some of the buildings of Constantine at Constantinople are shown in low relief on the Column of Theodosius II.,‡ and in the Basilica of the Consul Junius Bassus (317—340) we have a very remarkable illustration of the style of the internal decoration then in vogue throughout the empire. Sangallo (1482—1546), the celebrated architect, made a drawing of the Basilica, and some of its *opus sectile* decoration has been preserved,§ notably a consul attended by the representatives of the four *factiones* of the circus.|| These illustrations have been of great service to us, and

* Salzenberg.

† *Archæologia*, vol. 40.

‡ Menestrier.

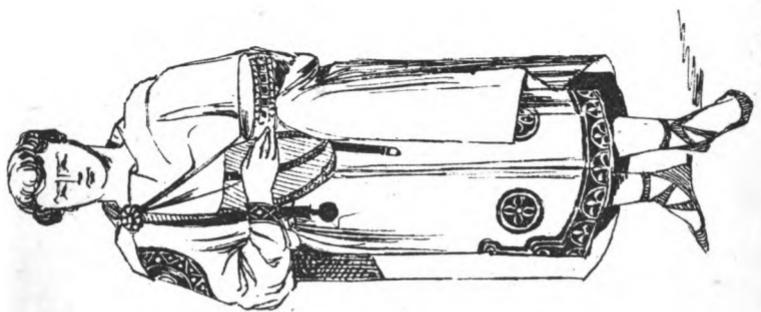
|| See an admirable paper on the subject in "Archæologia," vol. 45, by Mr. Alexander Nesbitt, F.S.A.

§ Now the property of the Prince del Drago.



Chorus
From the column
of
Theodosius.

Ant.

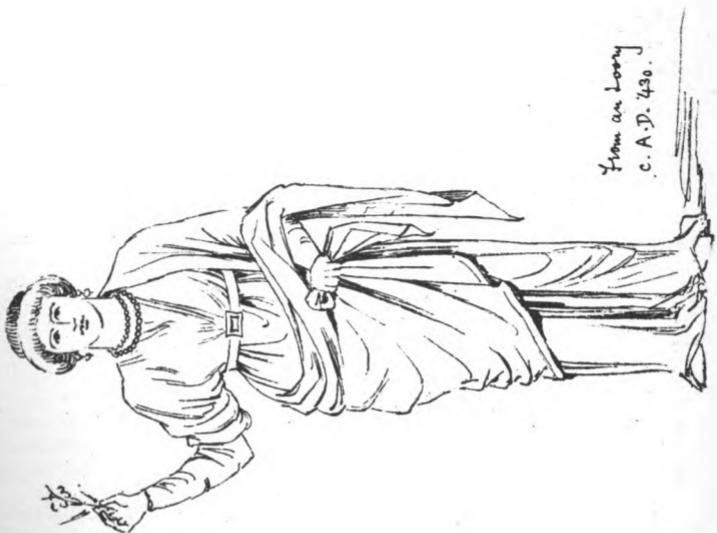


From the
Calacumba
Rose.

Ant.



From an ivory of A.D. 391.



From an ivory
c. A.D. 430.

Mr. Hann has most happily rendered them in his work. The floor in the palace interior scene is taken from an old example, showing that combination of tesserae and slips of marble which became quite a fashion in the middle of the fifth century.

The marbles most in use for floors and walls appear to have been *giallo antico*, serpentine, and porphyry. The common white marble was enriched with gilding and colour, for colour, whether as dyes for the dresses of the rich or inlays on buildings and furniture, was quite a passion of the time, and certainly helped to counteract the effect of bad detail and clumsy proportions.

And now a word or two as to the costumes.

In regard to this part of our work my chief authority has been the sculptured column of Theodosius; where this has not sufficed I have had recourse chiefly to the undermentioned illustrations:—

The sculptures on the base of the obelisk of Theodosius II.

The disc of Theodosius the Great.

The statues and coins of Julian.

The paintings in the Catacombs.

The Bassus mosaic already mentioned.

The consular diptychs ranging in date from 391 to 430, and other ivories.

Where possible to me I have gone to the objects preserved in our museum cases belonging to the period: *e.g.*, swords, spears, shields, axes, personal ornaments of gold, silver, bronze, precious stones, cameos, &c.

I am indebted to Signor Felice Niccolini, of the Museo Nazionale, Naples, for a series of large photographs illustrating the only known portraiture of a Roman litter in existence—a terra-cotta now in the Museo Borbonico; and although you do not make your first entry in a litter as originally intended, I am sure you will none the less appreciate the kindness of Signor Niccolini.

Of graphic descriptions by contemporary authors, perhaps the most graphic are those by St. Chrysostom, and letter xx. of Sidonius, which I append, together with brief extracts from Eusebius.

Taking these authorities together, we learn first of all, that the period 360—460 was distinguished for gorgeous display, and that only in country places among simple folk could one find that refinement and delicate beauty which was characteristic of old Greek days.

Among other extravagances of city life we find silk—then a very costly material, much in use (silk was of various kinds), boots and shoes gilded and enriched with embroideries, gold, jewels, and cameos. The “masher” of the period wore his under-tunic very long, and his mantle swept the ground. The emperor’s robe was embroidered with dragons, and his chariot was of gold and precious stones, further enriched with metal plates that hung loosely and wobbled to and fro, thus giving a very glittering effect.

A curious illustration of the use of metal plates is to be seen over one of the western doors in S. Sophia, where there is a row of nine of them looped on rings, suspended to metal hooks shaped as fingers.

The rich man wore two or three tunics all displayed and open at the side. Even the saddle-cloths of the horses were trebled, those beneath being larger, showed like borders to the uppermost.

The extravagance in jewellery was so great that £450,000 worth was absolutely worn at one time by one woman, and one pair of emerald earrings was worth the revenue of a large estate. The stones most in favour were the diamond, emerald, jasper, and sardonyx ; among common folk the cornelian was greatly used. Rings were worn so thickly that six on each finger would not be unusual, and even the slaves and poor people wore rings of iron, bronze, silver, and sometimes gold.

Then again, the different nationalities to be found in Constantinople gave brilliancy and diversity to the scene. The eastern and western Asiatic, the Nubian, the Egyptian, and representatives of nearly all the tribes of Europe, from the Danube to the Thames, were there ; of these last, no less than 40,000 were kept in the service of Theodosius, distinguished from the Roman soldier by golden collars (torques), better pay, and more license. The mention of the Roman soldier brings me by an easy transition to your tunic of the prologue.*

You will doubtless remember that it was a practice of the Romans to give their bravest soldiers "decorations," but instead of small crosses, or tiny ribbons or stars, these decorations (called *phaleræ*) took the form of circular medallions. A set of nine silver medallions, each 4*1*/₂ inches in diameter, was found near Crefeld, each bearing in high relief a head or bust, and are now in the possession of the Empress of Germany. I have casts of these, and they appear, as Mr. Wylie, F.S.A., says (Pro. Soc. Antiq., Nov. 29, 1860), "to have been fixed to a framework of leather, or other flexible material," put on over the armour on occasions of ceremony. The sepulchral monument of Cneius Musius, *aquilifer* of the Fourteenth Legion, and the figure in the monument of Caelius, now in Bonn Museum, and which belongs to the beginning of the first century, clearly exhibit the manner in which these *phaleræ* were worn.† Now, if we turn to the little Roman bronze warrior in the British Museum, and to the earlier consular diptychs, we shall find that a pattern has clearly resulted from this arrangement of *phaleræ*. It has become a textile decoration, at first *appliqued*, or embroidered, and afterwards, no doubt, woven ; hence your tunic. These embroideries—circular, annular, and square—were sometimes worn as an all-over pattern, with connecting lines, exactly like the leathern straps of the *phaleræ*, and sometimes isolated, one on each shoulder and one on each side of the skirt ;‡ hence the tunics of the gentlemen who accompany you.

You will notice that down the centre of your tunic is a broad purple band (purple, I may say, was of four tints, a blood-red, a violet, an amethyst, and the dark sea blue, which was the most highly prized). This purple band, I need hardly say, is the *latus clarus* of the senatorial order.§

Your attendants are clothed in a livery of red and green, the meaning of which is fully explained in vol. 45 of the "Archæologia."

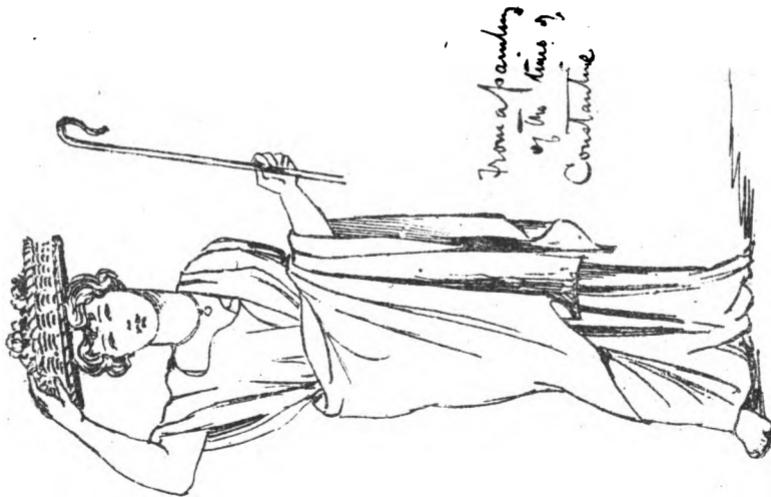
* Since writing this, you have resigned your tunic to one of your patrician companions, fearing it to be too garish.

† See Lersch's Centralmuseum, and Rich's Dictionary.

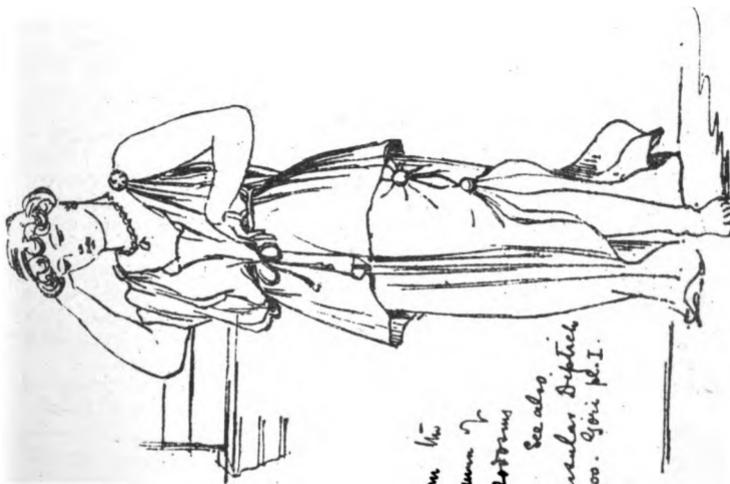
‡ See fresco near Church of the Lateran, and tessellated pavement (Pl. 20, vol. 2,

"Roach Smith's Collection of Antiquities.")

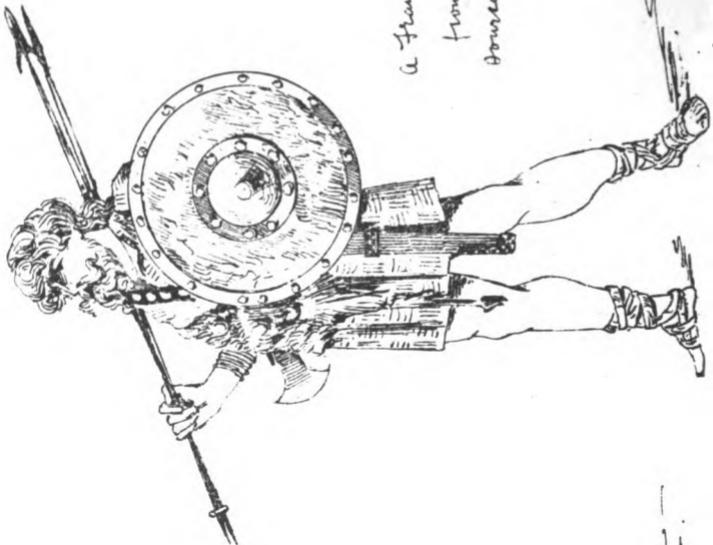
§ Gold and silver were sometimes used for these bands.



From a sketch
of the Temple of
Constantine



From the
Column of
Theodosius
See also
Constantine
Baptist
c. 320. Grec p. I.



The leading rich men of the period were great supporters of the circus, their studs of horses were large, bets were large, and party feeling in chariot races ran high.

The charioteers were divided into four companies or factions, representing the four seasons—

- “ *Prasina*,” green, spring, or earth.
- “ *Russata*,” red, summer, or fire.
- “ *Veneta*,” blue, autumn, or water.
- “ *Alba*,” white, winter, or air.

You, as a city potentate of the first magnitude, would naturally be the leader of one of the factions, and your people would declare by their dress to whom they belonged. I selected the red as the most appropriate to your character. On the edges of the mantles, some little distance from the centre, you will notice a square of decoration applied. The earliest instances I know of this mark of distinction are in the disc of Theodosius and in the Codex Rossanensis.

Concerning feet gear, the military wore sandals; the lowest class in the cities, as well as the rustics, wore shoes of untanned leather; and other people wore shoes and boots of scarlet, purple, or white leather, more or less decorated according to their social position; the high boot, or cothurnus, being reserved for generals and very distinguished personages.

The soldiers of 360—460 were not very unlike many of those seen on the columns of Trajan and Antonine; they almost invariably, in common with civilians, wore short pants or tight breeches, reaching to just below the knee. The light infantry appear to have been often merely clothed in shirt, leather jerkin, and helmet.

Of the dresses of the slaves, or country people, I need say but little, as these were practically the same as they had been for half-a-dozen centuries.

The Greek chiton and himation (the tunic and pallium of the Romans) lasted longer than any other dress I know of, and deservedly so, for it is unquestionably the most beautiful fashion the world has yet seen; much, however, depends on the way ladies put on and carry these garments, for even in Classic times it was a part of the every-day education to teach the pupils how to throw the himation, how to put on the girdle, and so on. Hitherto such Greek dresses as I have seen on the stage have been so worried with pins, and puckered into artificial folds, that I trust we shall have an agreeable surprise by seeing these simple garments worn in the artistic, unaffected, and simply beautiful way that distinguished the wearers of them in Byzantium, or Bithynia.

Believe me, my dear BARRETT,

Yours very faithfully,

E. W. GODWIN.

Westminster, November, 1883.

POSTSCRIPT.

EUSEBIUS.

“WITH regard to the roof it was covered on the outside with lead as a protection against the rains of winter. But the inner part of the roof, which was finished with sculptured fretwork, extended in a series of connected compartments, like a vast sea, over the whole church, and being overlaid throughout with the purest gold, caused the entire building to glitter, as it were, with rays of light”—Book III., chap. xxxvi., concerning the Church Constantine, built at Jerusalem (S. E. Parker’s translation).

In chap. liv. Eusebius speaks of the “tiling” of the temple roofs being removed.

In book IV., chap. lviii., writing of the church built by Constantine in honour of the Apostles, he says it was of vast height, “encased from the foundation to the roof with marble slabs of various colours. He (Constantine) also formed the inner roof of finely fretted work, and overlaid it throughout with gold. The external covering which protected the building from the weather was of brass instead of tiles, and this too was splendidly and profusely adorned with gold, and reflected the sun’s rays with a brilliancy which dazzled the distant beholder. The dome was entirely encompassed by a finely carved tracery, wrought in brass and gold.”

*A Letter written by Apollinaris Sidonius to his Friend
Domnitius, A.D. 469.*

“Sidonius to his dear Domnitius greeting,—

“I have been thinking what pleasure you, who are so fond of seeing arms and armour and warriors, would have felt had you seen Sigismus, a young prince of royal blood, arrayed in the style and costume of his nation, as a bridegroom should be, going to demand a wife at the court of his father-in-law. A horse adorned with rich trappings preceded him, and horses weighed down with sparkling gems preceded and followed him, but what was most striking in all this pomp was that he himself went on foot in the midst of his attendants, flaming with scarlet, flashing with gold, dazzling white with silk, with such grace, auburn tresses, and fair skin. The princes and warriors who accompanied him looked terrible even in peace; their feet were bound, to the heels, with hairy thongs—their knees, legs, and thighs uncovered. Besides this, these warriors wore tunics of varied colours, high in the neck but scarcely reaching the knees, the sleeves only concealed the upper arm, their green cloaks being bordered with purple fillets or fringes; their swords hung from their shoulder by tautly strapped belts, their flanks protected with reindeer hides studded with metal.

“Thus adorned they marched in company upon their way. Barbed spears bare they in their right hands, and they carried axes and missiles; their left sides well covered with the shields, the snow-white light playing on which, a tawny light glancing the while from the bosses of the same, produced an effect most charming. All this bravery to the end that in his wooing he might show as much pomp of Mars as of service of Venus.

“But why more in this strain? So rare a show lacked but thy presence. For when I look on a sight dear to thee, thyself the while absent, a very yearning for thee holds me impatient. Farewell.”

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